Editor's introduction

D. J. Henderson¹

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In this edition of *Curriculum Perspectives* we hear voices from different parts of the curriculum landscape. Beliefs about what constitutes curricula, such as what should be taught, for what ends, and for what reasons, are always contested. In the first paper, Lindelani Mnguni, R. Ahmad Zaky El Islami, Headman Hebe, Indah Juwita Sari and Adi Nestiadi delve into an aspect of this in relation to the teaching of science in schools. The findings from their comparative study of the preferred curriculum ideologies of a group of South African and Indonesian science teachers found that student-centred approaches were favoured by teachers in both countries. However, in noting this preference, local contextual factors that inform and shape teachers' curriculum ideologies were also identified as significant.

The second paper is concerned with the ways in which historical knowledge is shaped through particular approaches to writing school textbooks in the Philippines. Ma. Lourdes S Nery-Cura and Allan de Guzman draw from semi-structured interviews with twenty Philippine secondary History textbook authors to propose a textbook writing framework to foster the development of historical understanding in ways that extend beyond presenting the past as a chronology of events. Next, Majed Harb and Hanada Taha-Thomure argue for a critical examination of the ideological assumptions embedded in literacy curricula. The authors advocate for alternative pre-service teacher education programs that prepare graduates to be both literacy educators and social activists.

The three papers that follow examine some specific aspects of the Australian Curriculum. Philip Poulton's paper draws from a case study of an Australian primary school engaging in a top-down, bottom-up approach to curriculum reform from a teacher-researcher perspective. The article explores primary teachers' reported experiences of agency and identifies some

potential enablers and constraints to agency in top-down, bottom-up curriculum reforms.

In her paper, Jacinta Maxwell examines the complexity of teachers' curriculum work as they attempt to deliver the Australian Curriculum offshore in an Australian international school in the Middle East. The author explores teachers' perceptions of the relevance of the curriculum content they are expected to teach students, the majority of whom are from the United Arab Emirates and surrounding nations. A key finding from this research is that curriculum decisions, including those made with reference to students' ethnic backgrounds, were made 'in-house' without input from members of the Emirati or broader communities by teaching staff who are not from the region. In turn, this raises broader questions about the place of community consultation and intercultural work in delivering curricula in Australia-based schools in international contexts.

Ruth Reynolds, Suzanne MacQueen and Kate Ferguson-Patrick focus on the fact that whilst young people were positioned as "active and informed" local-global citizens in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008), which informed the development of the Australian Curriculum, it is challenging to locate opportunities to address this in the primary school area of the curriculum. Their paper exposes some of the complexities of espousing active global citizenship; and then interrogates the primary school Australian Curriculum documents in Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), English and Science to find instances of guidance for teachers in promoting these ideas. It was found that learning 'about' active citizenship was an opportunity explored in the curriculum documents much more often than learning 'to be' active citizens.

Over the past decade, *Curriculum Perspectives* has published a range of papers about the development of the Australian Curriculum, however, few papers have addressed the inclusion of the Arts in the intended curriculum. There is an increasing body of research evidence that quality arts processes and experiences foster a distinctive and critical set of understandings and skills that all young people require to navigate the demands of life in the twenty-first century. By way of

✉ D. J. Henderson
dj.henderson@qut.edu.au

¹ Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove, QLD, Australia

contributing to this curriculum scholarship, Robyn Ewing's paper in the Australian Curriculum section of this edition, addresses the importance of arts education in this country.¹ Ewing reminds us that although inclusion of the Arts in the Australian Curriculum represents an important milestone, it continues to be at risk of a compromised implementation. She cautions that a quality national arts curriculum cannot be actualised until there is an investment in pre-service teacher education, ongoing teacher professional learning and the equitable provision of arts experiences and resources.

The politics of knowledge - those questions about what knowledge is deemed of most worth - lie at the heart of debates about curricula. The Guest Editors of the Point and Counterpoint section, Lew Zipin and Marie Brennan, both leading Australian curriculum scholars, challenge us to consider the inherent limitations of 'official knowledge' in national curriculum documents without giving emphasis to equally important questions about the value-laden nature of knowledge.

In emphasising knowledge as a social product, Zipin and Brennan invite us to consider ethical questions of justice such as: Whose knowledge matters? Towards what social purposes? And who (what groups) should be represented, how, in what curriculum decision-making processes? I am most grateful to Lew and Marie for inviting scholars to contribute to the discussion of how a knowledge-and-ethics orientation can be achieved. Collectively, the papers in this section provide rich insights into how including knowledge from students' diverse life-worlds in curriculum can not only enrich and extend their knowledge and understanding, but also foster their capacity for participatory-democratic agency. As noted in the last paper in this collection, bringing ethics-and-knowledge into a dynamic interplay when considering the *what* and *how* to teach enables us to re-purpose curricular activity in agentic ways.

In the final paper, Peter Brett reviews Alistair Ross's examination of the ways in which young people in Europe construct their political identities. *Finding Political Identities: Young People in a Changing Europe* is the outcome of small discussion groups with 2000 young people across 29 European states (Ross 2019). Significantly, Ross contends that generally the young people that he spoke with did not see themselves as members of 'fixed tribes' but as 'comfortably constructing flexible and multiple political identities' (p. 2). He argues that schools and colleges need to be encouraged to foster political discussions with students, from the middle and upper primary school years. Ross asserts that young people should be supported in deliberating about the world around them, such as the events that are happening around them, the media they see, and what they hear and read elsewhere. Furthermore, he emphasises that young people need to be encouraged to have a healthy scepticism of what individuals do and say in the public sphere.

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¹ This paper is a revised version of a chapter that was published in Reid and Price (2018).